STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON

EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

ON

UNDERSTANDING FUTURE IRREGULAR WARFARE CHALLENGES

MARCH 27, 2012

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this distinguished panel. The future of irregular warfare, and what we should do about it, is as vital a subject as there is in national defense these days, and I am pleased to have this chance to share my views with such a group as yours.

You have my bio; let me just say that, starting as a lieutenant in Army Special Forces in a long-ago war, the subject of war, and specifically irregular warfare, has been my focus for over forty years. Although I have the honor to be a Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security, the views I present here are my own.

In its plainest form, "irregular warfare" is not "regular" warfare; some forms of irregular warfare can be beneficial; our own nation began with an insurgency, which is a form of irregular warfare. But some forms of irregular warfare become plainly dangerous to us when they challenge what we believe about human dignity and freedom. The kinds of irregular wars we're most liable to confront in the emerging 21st century are new kinds of insurgencies, driven by new motivations and new tactics. I'd like to focus my remarks on the changing nature of insurgency, since I think they are the most likely kinds of irregular warfare we'll see in the future.

Insurgencies have three enduring characteristics that are useful to remember. One is that they are ultimately about politics, as all war is. Second, no two are ever the same, because political conditions are never the same. And finally, insurgencies follow a sort of "arc," or sine curve, that begins with criminal acts, gathers force as it climbs, and then either peaks in success or, if counterinsurgency is successful, is driven back down the curve so that it ultimately becomes a matter for routine law enforcement once again. In a nutshell, successful counterinsurgency means driving the insurgency back down to common crime.

This relationship of crime to conflict – to irregular warfare, insurgency and its little brother, terrorism -- is the dominant factor that is changing the conduct of irregular warfare in the 21st century from what we knew in the 20th. Other factors are the communications revolution, human migration, arms trafficking and there are others. But there is so much

illicit money out there – estimated to be one-fifth of the world's GDP – that it is having an enormous political impact, and one such impact is to fund terrorist and insurgent groups. One way to look at the Taliban and its associated warlord supporters, for example, is as big smuggling operations – drugs, money, arms, you name it. The same is true of the Colombian FARC, or virtually any insurgency in the world today.

In the 21st Century, crime, terrorism and insurgency are blending in new political and social combinations that will call for new understandings of irregular warfare and approaches in counterinsurgency. Although some still deny the reality, one need look no further than the impact and reach of the Mexican criminal cartels – now called "Transnational Criminal Organizations" – to see the face of modern irregular warfare, insurgency and terrorism.

Despite the hard work and sacrifice of operators in the field, and some notable successes, we – the United States government – are poorly organized to meet those challenges, in my opinion. Here are some suggestions on how we can best prepare.

First, we should recognize that we are entering a new post-Westphalian era of potentially constant, borderless conflict. "Irregular warfare" is poised to become the new "regular" warfare. Some states have become "criminal states." Iran, for example, has attempted, and I think will attempt again, to hire criminals to conduct terrorist strikes inside the United States. This is a huge step, and indicates that our borders are no longer protection against other states, as well as against criminals like the 9/11 gang. As a matter of some urgency, it should become the objective of the United States and its friends to find ways to force transnational conflict back into controllable, legal channels, or we will face a century without rules and without restraint.

Second, with regard to insurgency, the most likely form of "irregular warfare," we have to have the right perspective. Unless we're fighting in Alabama, we're *not* the "counterinsurgency" force. The real counterinsurgent is the host country, and we are third-party intruders in a family fight. Our whole aim, therefore – our strategy, our training, our equipment – should be designed to make our host as strong as possible against his insurgency. This is how *we,* the United States, must

learn to fight irregular warfare and counterinsurgency. We urgently need to learn how to advise foreign armies and foreign governments with minimal presence where it counts, rather than muscling in with massive troop buildups and foreign aid that eclipses, and often alienates, the very people we are trying to help. I would be happy to expand on the training and role of military advisors, having been one myself.

As an example of successful US assistance to a successful counterinsurgency, the subcommittee should look closely at the example of Colombia, which has rebounded from a lost cause a decade ago to the best – and only – currently successful example in this hemisphere. The Colombians have not only used their military and police forces together in an exemplary way, but they have also focused their entire government on reestablishing the rule of law, reclaiming their country and on an extensive rehabilitation and retraining program that, frankly, we could learn a lot from. I should add that the Colombians are now helping the Mexicans and others in Latin America, and could be more effective with even a little more help than what we are currently giving them. This is how we win in "irregular warfare."

Third, we need to change our thinking and how we allocate resources. Old definitions of crime, terrorism, insurgency, irregular warfare and so forth often "stovepipe" our responses among government agencies and funding streams; worse, they cramp our mental responses and force them into irrelevant directions, while our enemies, unrestrained, simply adapt and carry on. This subcommittee could make no better contribution that try to un-stovepipe budget lines that split hairs in this regard and free field operators to better collaborate, and this goes across the whole government, not just DoD. My preference would be a general category of "military assistance" that would cover the whole "irregular warfare" area, so that we could provide flexible assistance to our friends – to include combat advisors – without the politically charged (to our allies) label of "warfare" attached. But I leave that to others to decide.

The term "whole of government approach" has been used so often in recent years that it has become trite. But in fact, aiding another country to fight an irregular war, whether insurgency, or terrorism, or

widespread trans-national criminal networks supporting both, takes all the resources from our whole government, not just DoD. Other US agencies have been instrumental in helping our allies – for example, the Drug Enforcement Agency's "Trusted Officer" program assisted the Colombians – and others – to clean up their police forces. The DEA, FBI, USAID and others are often key below-the-line contributors to successful missions that aid our friends. I should not have to point out that State plays a key role, and they are so severely underfunded that, I am told, they cannot now hire Foreign Service Officers at replacement rate.

Finally, we have long-term challenges here at home. I have argued that crime, terrorism and insurgency are blending, and a result of that blend is politically motivated irregular conflict that spreads across borders in ways that would have been unthinkable – and impractical – just twenty years ago.

We can respond in a number of ways, and we have made great strides in homeland security and policing in the past decades. At the highest level, though, our best defense in a turbulent century is citizens who solidly support their government and their nation in a time of great change and stress. The present political gridlock in Washington, and the anti-government cant from some, is eating away at the trust our citizens must have in our government, over the long term, to stand against the disintegrative and destructive forces best exemplified by the Mexican cartels.

Our inability thus far to enact comprehensive and humane immigration reform is a national security Achilles Heel. It not only denies us the services and taxes of perhaps ten million or so potentially patriotic citizens, but also risks creating a fearful, embittered and alienated minority in this country that is already becoming the unwilling – and I stress unwilling -- host for transnational crime. The crimes of 9/11 and the current insurgencies in the world are only the beginning of challenges we will face in the 21st century. The most important counterinsurgency strategy we can adopt – and the most essential – is a unified and committed country. That must be our highest priority.